

for people convicted of terrorism, defined broadly to include any acts resulting in a “terrorist outcome,” such as declaring by any public means “enmity to the state or regime” or “non-allegiance to its leadership”.

In November, the government declared al-Islah and more than 80 other groups “terrorist” organizations; they included many armed groups active in other countries as well as several Muslim aid organizations.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Women faced discrimination in law and practice. The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers recorded “institutionalized gender discrimination within the administration of justice”. She highlighted that women were not allowed to become federal court judges, in violation of CEDAW, to which the UAE is a party.

MIGRANT WORKER’S RIGHTS

Despite protective provisions in the 1980 Labour Law and subsequent decrees, foreign migrant workers were exploited and abused. Many workers, who had generally paid fees to recruiting agents, reported that they were deceived over the terms and conditions of their work. Construction workers often lived in poor and inadequate accommodation, while few held their own passports. Late payment or non-payment of wages was common. The *kafala* sponsorship system made workers vulnerable to abuse by employers, while those involved in collective action such as strikes or sit-ins were liable to arrest and deportation.

Domestic workers, mostly women from Asia, continued to be excluded from the protections afforded to other migrant workers, and faced physical violence, confinement to places of work and labour abuses. The authorities had been considering a draft law on domestic workers since at least 2012 but did not enact it in 2014.

DEATH PENALTY

Courts continued to impose death sentences, mostly for murder. In January, the authorities

in Sharjah emirate executed a Sri Lankan man by firing squad. The following month, the President declared a stay on all pending executions for murder to enable the authorities to contact victims’ families and ascertain whether they would accept “blood money” for their relatives’ deaths. In May, press reports indicated that a court in Abu Dhabi sentenced a woman to death by stoning for adultery.

UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Head of state: **Queen Elizabeth II**

Head of government: **David Cameron**

The Prime Minister confirmed that a Conservative Party government would repeal the Human Rights Act if elected in 2015. Allegations of torture in relation to counter-terrorism operations overseas remained unresolved. The government passed legislation extending communications data interception powers. Accountability mechanisms for historical human rights violations and abuses in Northern Ireland remained inadequate. Access to abortion remained extremely limited in Northern Ireland.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In a referendum held in Scotland in September, voters opted against independence.

Charities and civil society organizations expressed concerns about the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014, which entered into force in September. The Act could significantly restrict their public-facing

campaigning in a “regulated period” leading up to a national election.

The effects of cuts to legal aid made in 2012 and 2013, including under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act, continued to restrict access to justice. Legislation introduced to restrict judicial review raised similar concerns.

In October, Prime Minister Cameron confirmed that, if elected, a Conservative Party government would repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British Bill of Rights, with a view to limiting the influence of the European Court of Human Rights. Draft proposals threatened significant restrictions on rights.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Detainee Inquiry

In December 2013, a report of the Detainee Inquiry’s preparatory work was published, 23 months after the Justice Secretary’s closure of an inquiry into allegations of UK involvement in torture and other violations against individuals detained abroad in counter-terrorism operations. The report set out lines of investigation for any future inquiry. The government announced that the matters raised by the Detainee Inquiry’s report would be addressed by the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee, rather than by an independent, public inquiry.¹ The government deferred indefinitely the prospect of any new, independent, judge-led inquiry.

Libyan renditions

On 30 October, the Court of Appeal ruled that there were compelling reasons requiring it to exercise jurisdiction over a civil claim brought by married couple Abdul Hakim Belhaj and Fatima Boudchar, who alleged that they were victims of rendition, torture and other ill-treatment in 2004 by the US and Libyan governments, with the knowledge and co-operation of UK officials.² The government appealed against the decision.

Diplomatic assurances

The government continued to rely on unreliable and unenforceable diplomatic

assurances when seeking to deport individuals allegedly posing a threat to national security to countries where they would be at risk of grave human rights violations, including torture.

In July 2013, the UK authorities deported Abu Qatada to Jordan where the State Security Court failed to disregard torture-tainted “confessions” in two criminal trials against him (see Jordan entry). In July 2014, the Court of Appeal heard an appeal by eight Algerian nationals against a January 2013 decision by the Special Immigration Appeals Commission to allow their deportation with assurances.

Armed forces in Iraq

In May 2013, the High Court ruled that the Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT), a unit within the Ministry of Defence set up to investigate allegations of abuses of Iraqi civilians by UK armed forces between March 2003 and July 2009, was failing to meet its obligations to uphold the right to life. The judge ruled that small inquiries modelled on inquests were needed, but rejected the claimants’ arguments that IHAT lacked independence and should be replaced by a single, public inquiry.

In May 2014, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court reopened a preliminary investigation into allegations that UK armed forces committed war crimes involving systematic detainee abuse in Iraq.

In November, a High Court judge ruled that two Pakistani men captured by UK forces in Iraq in 2004 and subsequently transferred to US custody in Afghanistan, had the right to sue the UK government in UK courts for damages.

In December, the Al-Sweady Inquiry, established in 2009 to examine allegations that British soldiers tortured or ill-treated nine Iraqi detainees after a battle near the town of Majar al-Kabir in southern Iraq in 2004, published its findings. The report found the most serious allegations to be “wholly without foundation”, but acknowledged that detainee handling practices had been “less

than satisfactory” and “developed on an ad hoc basis”, and compounded by the lack of guidance for soldiers.

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

In October 2013, the Supreme Court stated its concern about the excessively broad statutory definition of terrorism in the case of *R v. Gul*, referring to reports by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. In February 2014, however, the High Court held that the decision to stop, question and detain David Miranda, the spouse of journalist Glenn Greenwald, in August 2013 under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 had been lawful and proportionate. The decision was appealed against. The Independent Reviewer reiterated his call for narrowing the definitions of “terrorism” and “terrorism-related activity” during the year.

In October, the prosecution of UK national Moazzam Begg collapsed. He was on trial for seven terrorism-related offences relating to Syria. The prosecution offered no evidence at trial after receiving new information, allegedly from the British security service MI5. The trial judge formally entered “not guilty” judgments on all seven charges.³

In November, the government introduced the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill as fast-tracked legislation. The proposed powers included restricting the travel of people suspected of involvement in terrorism-related activity, including exclusion of certain UK residents who refuse to agree to government-imposed conditions on their return home. It also added powers under existing Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures, restricting the liberty, movement and activities of people believed to pose a threat to national security.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The mechanisms and institutions mandated to address “legacy” (conflict-related or historical) human rights violations in previous decades operated in a fragmented and incremental manner.

The Historical Enquiries Team (HET), mandated since 2006 to re-examine all deaths attributed to the conflict in Northern Ireland, was closed following wide criticism. In July 2013, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary had found that the HET reviewed cases involving the state with less rigour than non-state cases. The transfer, announced in December, of some of HET’s work to a Legacy Investigative Branch within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) prompted concerns over the independence of future case reviews.

Positive reforms to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) continued throughout 2013 and 2014. A 30 September report by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland found that confidence in the OPONI’s investigation of historical cases had been “fully restored”. However, on the same day, cuts to the OPONI’s budget led to a loss of 25% of staff working on legacy cases, and serious concerns about the OPONI’s ability to complete “legacy” casework.

Under-resourcing and delays to Northern Ireland’s coronial inquest system remained endemic. In a November judgment, the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland noted that the legislative failure to remedy deficiencies in the inquest system were preventing coroners from exercising their role satisfactorily and expeditiously.

The government remained unwilling to establish public inquiries into legacy cases. In September 2013, the Northern Ireland Secretary refused to establish an inquiry into the August 1998 bombing by the Real IRA armed group in Omagh. The government continued to refuse to establish an independent inquiry into the 1989 killing of Belfast solicitor Patrick Finucane.⁴

In September 2013, inter-party talks chaired by former US diplomat Richard Haass began with the aim of reaching agreement on parades and protests; the use of flags, symbols and emblems; and how to deal with “the past”. The talks ended

without agreement on 31 December 2013. The draft Haass proposals detailed two mechanisms: an Historical Investigation Unit (HIU) and an Independent Commission for Information Retrieval (ICIR).⁵ Further talks, which concluded in December 2014, agreed in principle to take forward the Haass proposals of an HIU and ICIR, although details of finance, resourcing, timeframes and legislation were not completely resolved at the end of the year.

In June, the Irish television channel RTÉ broadcast newly discovered archival material suggesting that the UK had misled the European Court of Human Rights in *Ireland v. UK*, over the use of five torture techniques used by British security forces in Northern Ireland in 1971-1972. In December, the Irish government sought a reopening of the case by the European Court. Lawyers for the victims also called for an independent, human rights-compliant investigation in the UK into the new evidence.⁶

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Access to abortion in Northern Ireland remained limited to exceptional cases where the life or health of the woman or girl was at risk. The Abortion Act 1967 did not apply to Northern Ireland. In October, the Department of Justice opened a consultation on legislating for access to abortion in cases of rape, incest and fatal foetal anomaly.

SURVEILLANCE

In July, the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act entered into force, extending the reach of the authorities' interception powers by providing potentially wide-ranging extraterritorial effects to UK interception warrants. Sufficient safeguards were not in place to ensure that such surveillance was authorized and carried out in conformity with the rights to privacy and freedom of expression.

In December, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) made public its open judgment in the first part of a complaint brought by

Amnesty International and other NGOs about the UK authorities' communications surveillance practices. The IPT found that the authorities' surveillance practices were in accordance with the law. Significant portions of the proceedings were held in secret.⁷

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In January, the government announced that it would provide resettlement for 500 vulnerable Syrian refugees. The Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme prioritizes assisting survivors of torture and violence, women and children at risk and those in need of medical care, as identified by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

In March, an inquest jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing in the death in 2010 of Jimmy Mubenga, an Angolan national who died after being restrained by private security guards on board a plane deporting him to Angola. In December, the three guards involved in his removal were cleared of manslaughter.

In July, the High Court found that the long-term immigration detention of a Guinean woman constituted inhuman and degrading treatment. It was the sixth such court finding since 2011.

In December, the Court of Appeal found the policy underpinning the UK's "detained fast-track" asylum process to be unlawful and upheld the High Court's earlier July ruling that inadequate access to legal representation rendered the process unlawful.

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In June, the government published draft legislation to address slavery and human trafficking in England and Wales. The Modern Slavery Bill was amended to include UK-wide provisions, including the establishment of an anti-slavery commissioner.

Also in June, the anti-trafficking legislation was presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Similar legislation was presented to the Scottish Parliament in December.

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1. United Kingdom: Joint NGO letter (EUR 45/005/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR45/005/2014/en
 2. UK: Court of Appeal allows lawsuit to proceed in case of illegal rendition to torture in Libya (EUR 45/010/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR45/010/2014/en
 3. UK: Collapsed prosecution of Moazzam Begg (EUR 45/009/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR45/009/2014/en
 4. United Kingdom/Northern Ireland: Still no public inquiry twenty-five years after the killing of Patrick Finucane (EUR 45/003/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR45/003/2014/en
 5. United Kingdom/Northern Ireland: Haass proposals on dealing with the past (EUR 45/001/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR45/001/2014/en
 6. UK/Ireland: Landmark 'hooded men' torture case should be reopened (News story)
www.amnesty.org/en/news/ukireland-landmark-hooded-men-torture-case-should-be-re-opened-2014-11-24
 7. UK court decision on government mass surveillance: 'Trust us' isn't enough (Press release)
www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/uk-court-decision-government-mass-surveillance-trust-us-isnt-enough-2014-12

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States of America

Head of state and government: **Barack Obama**

President Obama acknowledged that torture had been carried out following the 11 September 2001 attacks (9/11) under a secret detention programme authorized by his predecessor and operated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). However, accountability and remedy for the crimes under international law committed in that programme remained absent. The declassified summary of a Senate report into the programme was released in December. Scores of detainees remained in indefinite military detention at the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, while military

commission trial proceedings continued in a handful of cases. Concern about the use of prolonged isolation in state and federal prisons and the excessive use of force by police continued. Thirty-three men and two women were executed during the year.

BACKGROUND

The USA appeared before three UN treaty bodies in 2014. In April, the Human Rights Committee criticized the USA on a range of issues - including the lack of accountability for abuses in the counter-terrorism context, solitary confinement in prisons, racial disparities in the criminal justice system, targeted killings by drones, excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, the treatment of migrants and the death penalty.¹ In August, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also made numerous recommendations to the USA. In November, the Committee against Torture's concluding observations similarly covered a range of issues.²

IMPUNITY

In August, President Obama acknowledged that the USA used torture in its response to the 9/11 attacks. He stated that torture was carried out under "some" of the "enhanced interrogation techniques" used in the programme, not just the one known as "waterboarding" (mock execution by interrupted drowning). Nevertheless, the President remained silent on accountability and redress, reflecting the USA's continuing refusal to meet its international obligations on these issues. Neither did he make any reference to enforced disappearance, a crime under international law to which most, if not all, of those held in the secret programme were subjected, some of them for years.³

In April, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) voted to submit for declassification the summary of its report into the CIA's secret detention and interrogation programme operated between 2002 and 2008. Release of the summary